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ARCH CONNELLY
WORKS 1981 - 1993





ABOUT ARCHIE

I met Archie at “Everybody’s,” where he was a downtown New York fixture cooking short-order brunches on the weekends for both the famous and the obscure. Although I had seen his art over many years, I did not really know him well. Very soon, however, we began speaking every day, right up until he died, five years later.

On those weekends, I would stay after the restaurant closed, and while we discussed the latest movies or art shows we had seen, Archie would gather up all the white and natural-colored eggshells he had

cracked during work, carefully load them into those soft, gray cardboard crates, and we would carry them over to his studio nearby.

Archie started using them to create beautiful round and oval paintings, lovingly breaking the pieces into smaller pieces and delicately gluing them onto canvas before varnishing the mottled surface. I had told him that “rococo” means “shell,” and that amused him, because he appreciated how mundane materials can have art historical references. He knew that “baroque” means “irregular pearl,” and he often used fake pearls to encrust everyday objects, pearls used like

crushed nuts rolled over the chocolate on an Almond Roca.

That was Archie in a nutshell: taking something we all recognize from our everyday lives and, by bits and pieces, making art out of it. Even those things we may overlook or discard in the course of a day—like eggshells thoughtlessly tossed into the trash—not only can they be turned into art, but they proba-

bly bear some relation to an older artistic tradition. And every true artist seeks to continue and extend some part of that tradition.

Although to the casual observer Archie may have appeared the consummate urban sophisticate, those who knew him better were frequently reminded of his deep midwestern roots. He spoke fondly of growing up on a farm in rural Illinois, and was always delighted to receive from home a shipment of chicken droppings to be used as fertilizer in his window boxes. A certain midwestern ethic of hard, honest labor comes through strongly in his art. The obsessive, intensive effort

that goes into fashioning each object forms a part of the meaning of what Archie accomplished.

There were yard-high piles of file folders in Archie’s studio, with thousands of little clippings from flower-seed and jewelry catalogues that were the raw materials for his collages. These cuttings he intricately strung together and laid down to form the landscapes around his almost-nude figures. The pesky pennies we might just let accumulate around the house Archie hot-glued onto found objects, one by one, row after row, as if planting a corn field, working compulsively to transform them into sculpture.

Unlike many contemporary artists, Archie liked a lot of activity in his work, a lot of detail. For him, less was not more, it was a bore. And he really liked fake, shiny, vulgar and tacky materials, because, like the Pop artists, he understood the liberating power of improper, “bad taste” when it invaded the world of art’s “good taste.” There is something slightly sinful, and also slyly humorous, about using black velvet and glitter or the clichéd “happy face” to make art. Archie shows us the beauty in these devalued subjects, and how the judgments we make are always a matter of context. A sequined dress worn in harsh daylight looks ridiculous, but that same glittering number with its iridescent shimmer looks smashingly sexy at night, or against the darkness of a nightclub. Archie’s work is always decked out in anticipation of a glamorous night out on the town.

The paintings with curvy, incised lines in luscious pigment and

ARCH CONNELLY
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Organized by the
ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM

Kent Smith, Curator
with assistance from Dan Connelly

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Art Department 217-524-0375

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UNIVERSITY GALLERIES

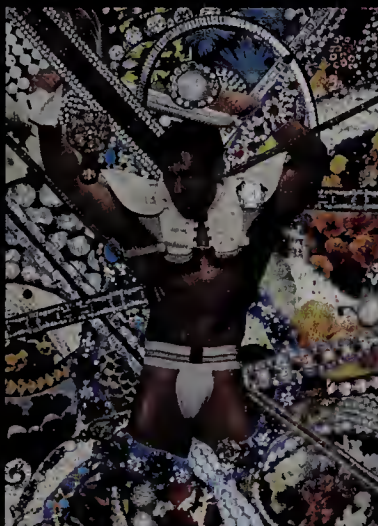
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January 24 - February 12, 1995

UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

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Carbondale, Illinois 62901
618-453-5388

April, May 1996





large sequins are being shown here for the first time. They were Archie's last works. In them we can see the affection he held for graffiti art. He had shown with some of the best graffiti artists at the famous Fun Gallery in the early 1980s, but it was not until the end that we can sense any influence. It is there, but on Archie's terms: in elegant scratches and scribbles that faintly suggest the innocent vandalism of carving into a wooden school desk. In these pastel and vaporous fields of etched loops and swirls dotted with spangles, Archie left his final, permanent mark.

Jeff Perrone

THE EXHIBITION

All dressed up in a sumptuous array of baubles, bangles, and beads, the works of Arch Connelly are charming essays that keenly probe some aspect of pictorial surfeit. His regular descents into over opulence are so openhanded as to be disarming, and his ebullient manipulation of the faux-jewels, jazzy sequins, and glitter that make up most of his palette is assured enough to carry a weight far beyond that of the materials themselves. Connelly—who died of AIDS in New York City last year and is celebrated here in a memorial retrospective in the state of his birth and training—was an artist who enjoyed operating in the muddy zone between camp and kitsch, always willing to risk excess in order to pursue the kind of goofy elegance he regularly achieved. His assemblages, sculptures, and paintings constitute a wonderful in-joke, imbued with enough cloying artisanry to make his glitter and sequins scintillate with pleasure.

The rectangle was often too staid to carry his rococo wanderings; more than half of the works shown here are round or oval. Curving edges provide just the added fillip and slight dislocation that invite further embellishment. In *Perfect Kiss*, 1985, Connelly tautly wrapped a circular orb with a sequence of gauzy scarves that coalesce at the center of the piece. He then encrusted parts of the scarves with a dynamic array of faux-pearls of different sizes—a few dozen of the thousand or more that are in this exhibition—radiating out in erratic rhythms from the center. Connelly's art is not without its wistful and poignant aura, and a

kind of fragility of feeling can lie just beneath its thickly bejewelled surfaces. This work, from its title to his subsequent layering of effusive "riches," bespeaks his effort to render an emotive substance through his manipulation of tacky but oddly sincere materials.

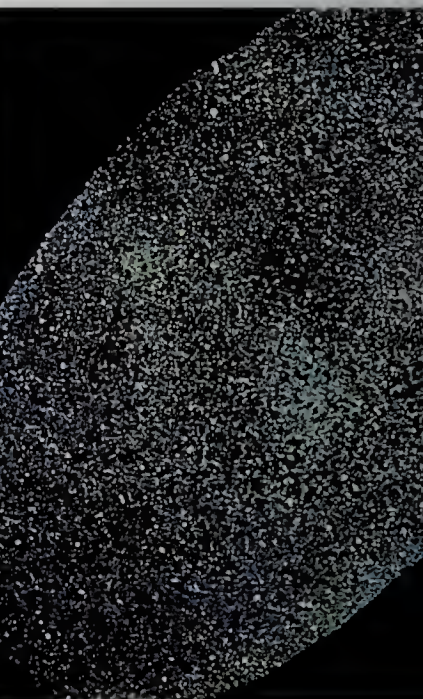
Another substance Connelly employed was bits of flattened eggshell, which cascade across the surface like manna falling from heaven. His painstaking application of this material onto often monochromatic abstract painting reflected a sensitivity to the delicate nature of the eggshell and with it he created a brittle craquelure. *Snow Leopard*, 1993, is an ivory-white piece; the slight discolorations among the eggshell bits the residue of a nature Connelly was loathe to suppress, here nearly submerging it within a cocoon of white paint. In his varying responses to his raw materials, Connelly was able to key up or down depending on his sources. His several, extremely busy collages, both spoofing and indulging in a certain kind of megahunk, gay erotica (one of these, *Local Boy*, 1991, appeared on the cover of the November 1991 issue of *Artforum*), produced a visual onslaught that is characteristic of his work. From the dizzying amplitude of these pieces—and of much of his work—it is clear that for Connelly rampant excess in the pursuit of charm and liveliness was no vice.

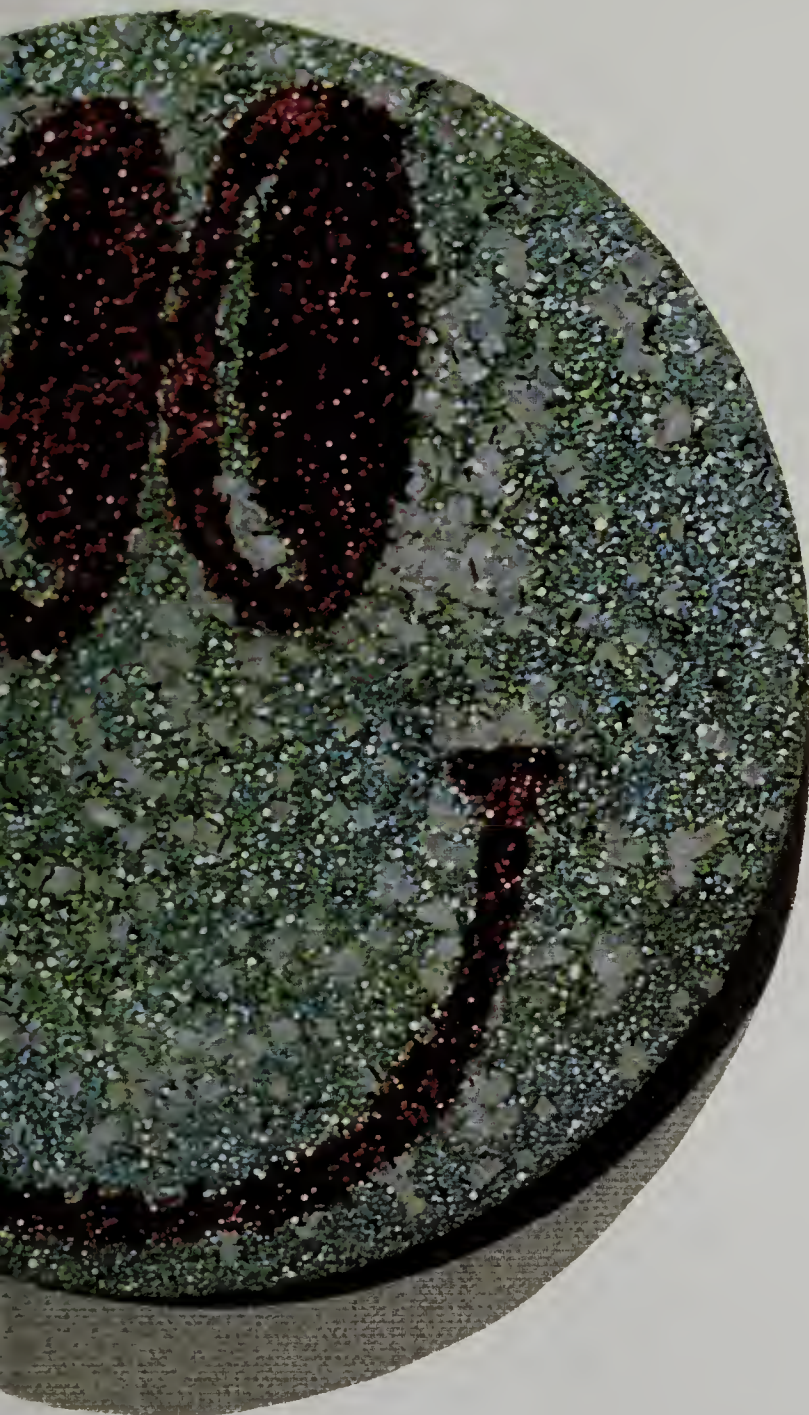
James Yood

from *Artforum*, "Reviews,"

February 1994

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Front cover:

IDEAL VARIABLE 1985

pennies, eggshells and faux pearls on board

Flap:

LOCAL BOY 1991

collage on canvas

Inside, from left:

SELF PORTRAIT 1981

acrylic and faux pearls on canvas

UNTITLED 1992

acrylic and glitter on canvas

NOT ENVY 1991

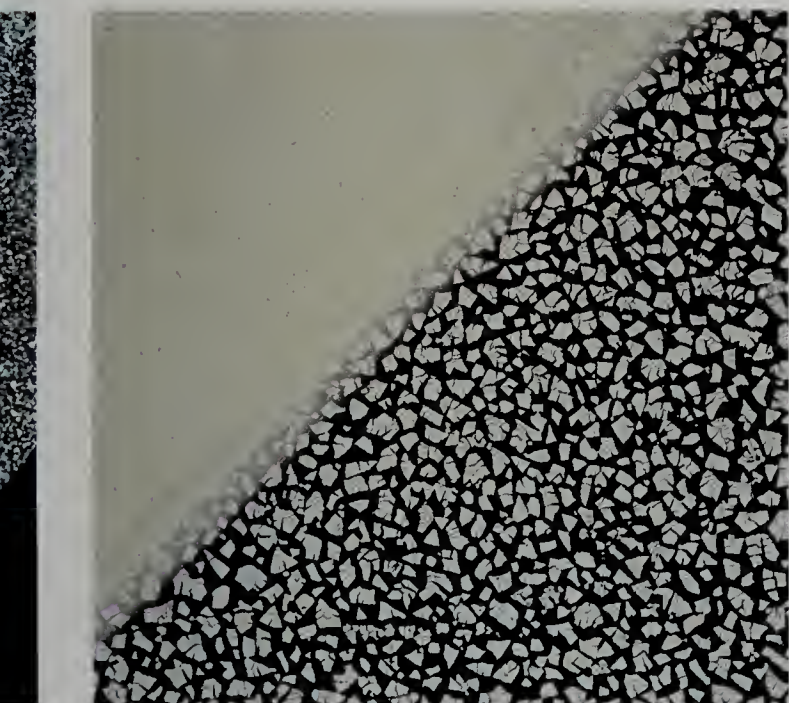
acrylic and glitter on canvas

KASHMIR 1990

acrylic, eggshells and glitter on canvas

WHAT I WON'T DO 1990

glitter and black velvet



Portrait of Arch
by Arne Svenson 1984





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks and recognition are due to Dan Connelly and Michael Connelly for their assistance in selecting and assembling this exhibition.

Dan expertly arranged the work for the installation in Chicago as well. I also wish to thank the Jeff Perrone, Jimmie Wright, James Yood and the Connelly family for their enthusiastic support and assistance.

Thanks to Barry Blinderman, Director of the University Galleries, Illinois State University, Bloomington, Normal;

Jack Whitlock, Director, University Museum, Southern Illinois University — Carbondale; and graphic designer Kevin Eddleman for their belief in the importance of Archie's work.

I wish to thank the staff of the art department in Chicago and Springfield for their many contributions to the project: Amy Jackson, Carole Peterson, Robert Sill, Phil Kennedy, Marlin Roos, Jane Stevens, Judith Burson Lloyd and Luke Dohner.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

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|--|--|---|---|
| <p>◆ SELF PORTRAIT 1981
acrylic and faux pearls on canvas
Collection of Michael Connelly, 20 1/2" x 16 1/2"</p> <p>PEARL FLOWER 1981
faux pearls and acrylic on plywood
Collection of Joel and Lisa Strong, 21" x 14"</p> <p>CHIP 1982
faux pearls, oil, acrylic and glass on paper mache, wood and wire
Collection of Jimmy Wright, 27" x 24" x 11"</p> <p>THE FUTURE REFLECTED 1982
faux pearls, faux jewels, and acrylic on moiré silk
The Connelly Family Collection, 40" x 40"</p> <p>PERFECT KISS 1985
faux pearls and fabric
The Connelly Family Collection, 36" x 36"</p> <p>HOW TO MISS THE BOAT 1985
acrylic, eggshells, faux pearls and metal chain on moiré silk
The Connelly Family Collection, 43" x 37"</p> <p>◆ IDEAL VARIABLE 1985
pennies, eggshells and faux pearls on board
Collection of Michael Connelly, 31" x 25"</p> | <p>SELF PORTRAIT 1987
sequins and glitter on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 40" x 12"</p> <p>TABU 1987
faux pearls and acrylic
Collection of Dan Connelly, 30" x 30"</p> <p>◆ STILL LIFE WITH CRYSTAL BALL 1987
acrylic, faux jewels and glitter on canvas
Collection of Michael Connelly, 42 1/2" x 13"</p> <p>SUPERNATURAL PAINTING 1988
eggshells on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 40" x 32"</p> <p>BASIC 1989
faux pearls, glitter and spangles on canvas
Collection of John and Mia Connelly, 16" x 16"</p> <p>SEX WITH MONKEYS 1990
eggshells and acrylic on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 48" x 48"</p> <p>NEGRO/ASIAN, HAPPY/SAD 1990
glitter and sequins on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 47" x 47"</p> <p>WHAT I WON'T DO 1990
glitter and black velvet
The Connelly Family Collection, 25" x 25"</p> | <p>BEMUSED, BOTHERED & BEFUDDLED 1990
acrylic and glitter on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 36" x 36"</p> <p>KASHMIR 1990
acrylic, eggshells and glitter on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 32" x 32"</p> <p>◆ LOCAL BOY 1991
collage on canvas
Collection of Michael Connelly, 14" x 10"</p> <p>NOT ENVY 1991
acrylic and glitter on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 16" x 16"</p> <p>PISSED 1991
acrylic and glitter on canvas
Connelly Family Collection, 16" x 16"</p> <p>HI! HI! 1991
acrylic and glitter on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 21" x 16"</p> <p>OOPS 1991
glitter, sequins and worked acrylic on plywood
The Connelly Family Collection, 15" x 15"</p> <p>UNTITLED 1992
acrylic and glitter on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 40 1/2" x 11"</p> | <p>MOAN 1992
acrylic and glitter on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 20" x 20"</p> <p>EASTER 1992
glitter and worked acrylic on canvas
The Connelly Family Collection, 20" x 16"</p> <p>CLOTHING OPTIONAL 1992
collage and glitter on plywood
The Connelly Family Collection, 15" x 15"</p> <p>HANDMADE EARRINGS AND PIN 1992
faux pearls and acrylic
Collection of Dan Connelly, 5 pieces</p> <p>SNOW LEOPARD 1993
eggshells and acrylic on plywood
The Connelly Family Collection, 20" x 20"</p> |
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◆ Chicago presentation only

ARCH CONNELLY

Arch Connelly grew up in Zion, Illinois, and in 1973 received a Bachelor's Degree in Ceramics from Southern Illinois University. He lived in San Francisco until 1980 when he moved to New York City. He died of AIDS at the age of 43. Born: 1950, Chicago, Illinois. Died: July 22, 1993, New York City

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1980 | Artists Space, New York City |
| 1981 | Fun Gallery, New York City |
| 1983 | Fun Gallery, New York City |
| | Tracey Garet—Michael Kohn, New York City |
| 1984 | Fun Gallery, New York City |
| 1985 | Fun Gallery, New York City |
| 1986 | Holly Solomon Gallery, New York City |
| | Charles Cowles Gallery, New York City |
| 1987 | 56 Bleeker Gallery, New York City |
| | Hokin/Kaufman Gallery, Chicago |
| | Galleria Murnik, Milano, Italy (catalogue) |
| 1989 | Less is a Bore, Groninger Museum |
| | Groninger, Holland |
| 1990 | La Giarina, Verona, Italy |
| 1992 | The Bar, New York City |
| | Collages and Faces, Galerie OZ, Paris, France |

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

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| 1981 | The Broken Surface, Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York City |
| | Downtown/Uptown, City Gallery of New York, New York City |
| | Lighting, P.S. 1., Long Island City, New York |
| | New York, New Wave, P.S. 1., Long Island City, New York |

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|------|---|--|--|---|---|
| 1982 | Extended Sensibilities, New Museum, New York City, (catalogue) | Anniottanta, Bologna, Imole, Ravenna, Rimini (catalogue) | Photo Collage, Physique Memorabilia, New York City | | |
| | Summer Group, Barbara Toll Fine Arts, New York City | Neo York, Center for Contemporary Art, Seattle Washington | Razzle Dazzle, Lintas Headquarters, Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, New York City | | |
| 1983 | Ourhaus, Danceteria, New York City | Abstract Relationships, Charles Cowles Gallery, New York City | 1988 | Beads, Structure, and Surface, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin | |
| | Three-dimensional Photographs, Castelli Graphics and The Nimslo Corporation, New York City | East Village Funktional, Rosa Esman Gallery, New York City | | Against Nature, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California (catalogue) | |
| | Intoxication, Monique Knowlton Gallery, New York City (catalogue) | Collage: Precursors and Forerunners, Holly Solomon, New York City | 1988/89 | Dwelling, 56 Bleeker Gallery, New York City | |
| 1984 | House on the Borderline, White Columns, New York City | New York from New York, Sande Webster Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | 1989 | The Center Show, Lesbian and Gay Community Center, New York City | |
| | Romantic Painting, Tracey Garet, New York City | A Brave New World.: A New Generation/40 New York Artists, Charlottenborg Copenhagen, Denmark. Travelled to Lunds Konsthall, Sweden (catalogue) | 1990 | QUEER, Wessel/O'Conner Ltd., New York City | |
| | 250,000 Sculptures, Civilian Warfare Gallery, New York City | Correspondences, New York Art Now Exhibition, Laforet Museum Harajuku, Tokyo (catalogue) | | Cold Baroque in New York, Gallerie OZ, Paris, France | |
| | New York, Larry Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles, California | 1986 | East Village Exhibition Fashion Institute of Technology, New York City | 1991 | Just What is it that Makes Today's Home So Different, So Appealing, The Hyde Collection, Glen Falls, New York |
| | Ecstasy, Monique Knowlton Gallery, New York City (catalogue) | | N.Y.-N.Y., Glittering Art, Bacardi Art Gallery, Miami, Florida | | The Automobile in Art, Virginia Beach Center for the Arts, Virginia Beach, Virginia |
| | The Next Show, Yves Arman Gallery, New York City | | Homage to Nicolas Moufarrege, Gabrielle Bryers Gallery, New York City | 1992 | Man Revealed, Graham Modern, New York City |
| | East Village Art in Berlin, Zellermayer, Berlin | | Holly Solomon Curates, Janie Beggs Fine Art Ltd., Aspen, Colorado | | Dangerously Cute, Galerie OZ, Paris |
| | Precious, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia (catalogue) | | Romanticism and Cynicism in Contemporary Art, Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (catalogue) | 1993 | The East Village, Pat Hearn, New York City |
| 1985 | Precious, Grey Art Gallery, New York City (catalogue) | | | | The 42nd Street Show, New York City |
| | 57 Between A and D, Holly Solomon, New York City | 1987 | Effeto Placebo, Galleria Murnik, Milano, Italy | | |
| | Neo York, University Art Museum, Santa Barbara, California (catalogue) | | | | |
| | The East Village Scene, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia | | | | |



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